

Mayor Curtatone:

Good evening. President White and Vice President Ballantyne; Chairman Sweeting and Vice Chairwoman Normand; Honorable members of the Board of Aldermen, School Committee, and our State Delegation; Superintendent Pierantozzi; Honored guests, friends, family and fellow citizens:

I want to wish you all a Happy New Year. I stand before you humbled, and resolute. I am humbled that every day, for the past 11 years, I have had the privilege of representing our community. It is a serious task, sober and demanding, but also one filled with great joy.

I am indebted to my wife Nancy; our sons Cosmo, Joey, Patrick and James; my mother; and all of my family for their patience and support. Before I am a mayor, I am a father, and a husband. Every day when I go home, it is my family that reminds me why public service is my vocation: It is our job as public servants to make the lives of the families and people in our community better.

Last week, we lost one of those dedicated public servants when Jimmy McCarthy passed away. I'd like to take a moment to honor him. Jimmy served his country and city with pride and dedication. He served on the school committee, and then the Board of Aldermen, where he was the first alderman to be elected president in his first year, and he remained dedicated to the city until he passed by serving on the Somerville Redevelopment Authority. He cared greatly about the city, cared about the community, and he was deeply proud of Somerville. We too are proud of him.

We are all also proud of our schools in no small part due to the outstanding service of another public servant who will retire this summer. Tony Pierantozzi's leadership of the Somerville Public Schools has been a decade of continuously better education, better results for our kids, and better futures for our families. Today, Somerville is the best performing urban school district in the state. Thank you Tony, for embracing Somerville and becoming Somerville.

As Tony leaves us, new leaders arise, re-energizing our efforts. We welcome the new leader of our schools who officially takes the reigns from Tony this summer - Mary Skipper.

We also welcomed another leader, and he is one that we are fortunate to have known for years - our new Chief of Police, David Fallon.

In his 16 years on the force, Chief Fallon has exemplified the community-based approach to protecting our people that is the foundation of today's Somerville Police Department. That approach is evident in the steps taken this past year. All Somerville Police cruisers are fully equipped with Narcan, enabling officers to save the lives of some of our most vulnerable residents.

We were the first city in Massachusetts to pass a local TRUST Act, to improve public safety and prevent the flawed and now-ended federal Secure Communities program from breaking apart families.

Today is Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day, when we celebrate a man who, from jail, wrote, “Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and establish such creative tension that a community that has consistently refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored.”

Nonviolent protesters in the spirit of Dr. King demonstrated in Somerville last month in the wake of the grand jury decisions in Ferguson and Staten Island. They were able to express their concerns, and they did so safely thanks to the thoughtful planning and peaceful approach of the Somerville Police Department. I am proud that the Somerville Police Department leads the way in upholding justice for all our people, with honor, dignity and integrity.

Our reform of our police department into a model of community policing is one of many accomplishments that we have achieved together. Another accolade we can rightly be proud of is: “The Best Run City in Massachusetts.”

But our community’s aspirations have always been more than simply having an efficient and effective government. We know that government can do more. It can change people’s lives for the better.

Cities cannot be led by mere managers, seeking the highest rate of return. As Robert F. Kennedy pointed out in 1968, our Gross National Product “measures everything in short, except that which makes life worthwhile.” Government has a critical role to play in the shaping the future of every person who lives in our community. When it comes to improving the lives of our people, government is not just *an* essential player—it is *the* essential player.

One year ago, at the inauguration, I vowed that we would intensify affordable housing efforts and that we would do what few cities have done: we would expand those efforts to include middle-income families so that our working middle-class is not squeezed out of the city. We then launched the Sustainable Neighborhoods initiative, and we submitted a new zoning code that goes beyond a simple expansion of our housing efforts. Our proposed code includes some of the most ambitious inclusionary housing requirements in the nation--and that includes requiring the creation of homes permanently affordable for middle-income households.

I said we would preserve artist and maker spaces and live-work buildings through new fabrication and arts districts. We then submitted a zoning ordinance overhaul that accomplishes just that, and that goes further to require that new buildings in transformational districts like InnerBelt and Brickbottom reserve 5% of their floor

space as leasable creative and maker space.

I said we'd launch a program to link local jobs with local people. We then launched our First Source jobs program with our partners at the SCC. We partnered with Federal Realty & SCC on job fairs at Assembly Row and as a direct result close to 50 percent of all new hires were from Somerville, exceeding national local source standards. We launched our Pocket Change program and Help Around Town online job board to connect local businesses with local job seekers.

I said we would expand our City's ethics ordinance so that Somerville has the toughest ethics laws in Massachusetts, and I am working with the Board of Aldermen to do just that. I announced a community budgeting process and then based on the priorities you shared through that process, we increased our investments in education, arts, culture, recreation and public health.

One year ago, we *said*. And then we *did*. We followed through on each promise.

We also looked back at what we accomplished together over the past decade - the establishment of Somerville's new legacy as a model of smart, efficient and effective government. We established that legacy by measuring, and then managing. But budgets do not tell whole story of a community. If we hold Kennedy's words dear to us, we cannot be satisfied just with good management.

We're going to aim higher. We aim to tackle not just issues that we face in Somerville, but the seemingly intractable questions that plague every city. Affordability. Education. Climate Change. Mobility. Public Health. The social progress of all our people. We've learned how to think differently. Now, we need to challenge ourselves to think bigger. We have to. Our nation is undergoing the greatest demographic shift since the 1950s with a historic return to the urban core. The cities that plan and build for that future are the cities that will be successful.

Somerville will be successful. Why? Because we have always dreamed big. Because, as Kennedy also once said, we dare to fail greatly, so that we can achieve greatly. We have an entrepreneurial spirit. We have a passion for curiosity. Somerville is not a community satisfied with pat answers. We understand that there is no such thing as a simple answer to these complex questions. Systemic problems require systemic solutions. We must do the hard work to solve our complex challenges if we are going to realize our shared hopes and dreams. **We. Aim. Higher.**

Those hopes and dreams start and end with one idea: Every person who wants to live in Somerville should be able to live in Somerville. Every person. Our diversity is at the very heart of who we are as a community. It is our soul. We cannot lose it. We **will** not lose it.

This past year, I put forth and the Board of Aldermen passed two important bills. Somerville homeowners now receive the largest residential property tax break in the

Commonwealth. No one else saves more. And developers will now contribute more in linkage fees, raising an expected \$1 million per year that is dedicated solely to creating affordable housing.

But housing costs are only part of the affordability puzzle. A resilient, sustainable local economy is needed, too. The groundwork we have laid, matching our community's vision with careful planning, has led to great milestones in the past year in building that sustainable economy. Phase One of Assembly Row is open. The development has its first high-tech tenant, SmartBear. Partners HealthCare has broken ground on its new administrative offices.

These businesses coming here didn't happen by accident. We studied how 21st century businesses were making decisions, created the environment that made them want to come here, and then recruited. Now our commercial tax base is growing in Assembly Square, and those new businesses are creating local jobs, for local people.

Our successes at Assembly Square are not by accident. They are the result of years of planning and work. We're going to undertake that same, community-based work in Union Square.

The challenge is different - Assembly is a brand new neighborhood built upon a largely blank slate; Union is already a great neighborhood. But our community's goals are the same: More businesses, more housing, more economic growth, more open space and more public amenities. Our proposed zoning code reflects those same values and goals. It will not only make it easier for small businesses and homeowners to make needed improvements, it will make development even more transparent and predictable, so we can build the homes, offices, open space and more that we need as we preserve our neighborhoods while pushing development to our transformative areas. CPA funds will help us reach these goals as well. Our community's support of the Community Preservation Act has yielded nearly \$5 million in funds from residents, the City, and the state available for affordable housing, open space, historic preservation, and recreation projects this year.

Bond rating agencies specifically cited our economic development strategy, when Standard & Poor's raised our bond rating last year two spots on its scale to its second highest rating—and we will get to the highest rating. We will get to AAA. Moody's also reaffirmed our highest ever rating. Those agencies cited our conservative budgeting. There is not a single dollar in our budget that has not been scrutinized, weighed and measured.

The budget reflects our values, which is why our schools remain the largest piece of the budget. Somerville Schools have realized enviable accomplishments this past year. Our schools are in the top 15% of all Massachusetts districts for student growth. We are the *only* urban district in the top 15%. Our universal kindergarten readiness strategy is accelerating: We have our first Director of Early Education on board. And the innovative new Somerville + Tufts Enhancing Leadership, Literacy and Readiness

program with Tufts University has begun, which will further improve the education our youngest learners receive in our classrooms.

Our schools are already thinking big, and are going to think bigger. The SomerPromise initiative is accelerating its goal to use data taken from tracking student improvement, analyzing it and using the results to shape our educational programs and priorities. Somerville is one of only eight local governments in the nation chosen to partner with Code for America in 2015. Code for America fellows will help us take our student data system to the next level.

We are also going to transform the way we move. Let's take a moment to celebrate the transportation milestones that were reached this year. Assembly Station is open. The Green Line Extension broke ground. The Green Line Extension is funded. The Obama Administration signed, sealed, and will deliver \$1 billion to build the Green Line Extension. **It's done.** We heard a lot of people over the years say that we would never get a station at Assembly. We heard a lot of people say the Green Line Extension would never get funded. You knew they were wrong. We kept fighting for it. Assembly Station is open. The Green Line Extension is happening. And alongside the Green Line Extension, the state has agreed to fund *and* build the Community Path Extension to Lechmere. We passed the first complete streets ordinance in the Commonwealth. We were ranked the #1 bike commuting city in the northeast. We launched the Parkmobile app, making us the first city in the region to offer payment by phone at every parking space in the city. And we completed our first-ever citywide accessibility survey.

We are not done. We look to the community's shared hopes in SomerVision. This year, we're going to think bigger. We aim higher. Like every issue we face, transportation is a complex system. So we will create a mobility plan that lays out the long-term, comprehensive vision for our community's transportation system. As the population of cities grows, we need to rethink the infrastructure that gets us around.

And as we build a transportation infrastructure for the 21st century, we must address water, sewer and building infrastructure that was built for the 20th century—and is aging rapidly. We need new buildings. Our Police and Fire Departments in Union Square are operating out of a building that began as an MBTA car barn in 1927. Somerville High School was originally built in 1872, and has not been updated in almost 30 years. We are moving forward with the state to conduct a feasibility study for the high school, and we have located a rare land opportunity on Somerville Avenue to create a new fire station. And we will be working to find a new home for our Police Department, which will give them the location and physical resources they need to keep our community safe.

The majority of our active sewers were constructed before 1920 as a combined system, carrying both sewer and storm water. We are developing a 15-year plan for our sewer system, and this past year we created a new water and sewer stabilization fund to address the need to continue separating our storm water and sewer systems

to improve performance and help mitigate flooding.

The issue of flooding brought on by increasing severe weather speaks to a larger problem than physical infrastructure. It speaks to climate change. This past year, we set our goal to become carbon neutral by 2050. Some would call that ambitious. Those paying attention rightly call it absolutely necessary. We will not abandon our children and our children's children to a world devastated by the scientific fact of climate change. Somerville will do its part. And we *must* aim higher.

This year, we will complete an inventory of our city's carbon output. We are soliciting ideas from green tech companies for projects we can pilot in Somerville. We are still asking our Retirement Board to **Divest from fossil fuels**. And this spring, we will launch a new Green Tech Program that will nurture the creativity of 21st century entrepreneurs while helping us reach our carbon goals, so that our future will be a healthy one—for our planet, for our children and for all who come after us.

Securing the long-term health of our community needs a holistic approach. The opioid addiction crisis we face today needs that holistic, community-wide approach, too. A little more than a decade ago, we faced an epidemic of opioid abuse among our youth. We beat back that epidemic through a collaborative approach that tapped into the wealth of resources in our community and addressed the problem from every angle—and before addiction began.

Today, the entire nation faces an epidemic, and we are not immune. Our first responders are now equipped with Narcan. But the work of saving a life starts long before anyone dials 911--and continues long after. We need as a region, state and nation to invest in prevention, education, intervention, treatment, and support for those in recovery. In Somerville, we will not only treat the symptoms. We will treat the disease of opioid addiction. Together with our community partners, with victims and survivors, and their friends and their families, we will once again beat back this epidemic.

Our greatness is not measured by what we own and acquire, but each other. It is not what we build that makes a city great. People make cities great. It is people that we must lift up - economically, environmentally and educationally. We must care for the health and wellness of all our people, and have tolerance and inclusion for all. We began measuring the well-being of our people by becoming the first city in the nation to measure resident happiness. This year, we will take the next logical step and become the first city in North America to gauge our progress with a Social Progress Index. We will measure success not in dollars and cents alone, but also by the kind of life afforded to everyone who calls Somerville home.

Kennedy spoke about how the Gross National Product was then over \$800 billion dollars a year, but that it did not measure “the health of our children, the quality of their education or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages, the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our

public officials.” Today, I say, envision a city that says our greatness is not only determined by production and wealth, but by high levels of tolerance, inclusion, sustainability, health and advanced education--and that is what we will measure. We should--and will--be that city.

And while we pursue these long-term goals, we will continue to improve core basic services. In our pursuit of ever-better customer service for *all* of our residents, we have expanded our award-winning community engagement efforts to include full-time Portuguese, Spanish and Haitian Creole language liaisons. Our Assessing Office undertook unprecedented outreach to better serve property owners. The new CitizenServe portal now allows everyone to apply for building and health permits online. Vital records like birth and marriage certificates can also now be purchased online.

This year, we will build a new, user-friendly and accessible City website. We will establish a Technology Leadership Council to ensure that as technology advances that we integrate the most useful new tools into our work. We will reintroduce our Mystery Shopper program to test our services. And we will continue to collaborate with organizations, from Harvard, MIT, Tufts and other universities to private businesses and service providers, to maximize our efficiency. We want good ideas—no matter where they come from.

Together we have achieved a level of success that nobody outside these 4 square miles thought we could - but we knew we could. We all fought for the Green Line Extension. We fought for Assembly Station. We fought to bring more businesses and jobs to our city.

We are succeeding. That makes things more complex, and new challenges arise. But we have achieved today's successes together. And we will tackle these new challenges together. We will continue to invest in our community, and invest in our people. People are what make a city great. You make this city great.

A year ago at the inauguration ceremonies, we celebrated a decade of progress together. Tonight, we challenge ourselves to achieve another decade of progress together - and for all of Somerville. Let's aim higher. Thank you.